

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method for obtaining warranty registration of products, facilitating return of lost products, and expediting warranty service on defective products comprising:
 - providing a unique identifier on or within each product;
 - providing a lost and found system comprising the steps of marking each product with return instructions and a reward offer to any person who finds said product after it has been lost; and offering to return each product to a registered owner in the event said product is lost and returned by said person who finds it if said owner provides data comprising owner identification and date said product was purchased at retail;
 - providing said data to a manufacturer or other warrantor in order to register said warranty.
2. Method of claim 1 wherein upon said product being lost and then returned to a return location by any said person who finds said product, said data is accessible at said return location or by a return agent, thereby facilitating identification of said owner and owner address, whereupon said product can be returned by said return agent.
3. Method of claim 1 wherein said unique identifier on or within each product sold by said manufacturer is electronically recorded in an RFID.
4. Method of claim 1 wherein said return instructions and reward offer to any person who finds said product after it has been lost are contained in a label which includes an RFID, and said unique identifier on or within each product sold by said manufacturer is electronically recorded in said RFID.
5. Method of claim 1 wherein said consumer purchaser or owner identification information and date said product was purchased at retail are provided by said consumer purchaser at said point of purchase at retail.

6. Method of claim 1 wherein said consumer purchaser or owner identification information and date said product was purchased at retail are provided at said point of purchase at retail by automatically accessing customer identification information provided to said retail seller in connection with said purchase and said date of purchase.

5

7. Method of claim 1 wherein said product retail purchase date and consumer or owner identification are automatically provided to said manufacturer or distributor when said information is received from said consumer purchaser or owner when said purchaser or owner enrolls in said free return service, and said manufacturer is automatically charged for delivery of said purchase date and consumer or owner information.

10

8. Method of claim 1 wherein said owner information is maintained by an operator of said return service in a computer server which is accessible from client computers over the Internet, and when an product is returned, said product is identified by said unique identifier on or within said product, said server is queried with said identifier, and arrangements are made for return of said product to said owner and payment of a reward to said finder.

15

9. Method of claim 1 wherein said owner information which comprises owner name, address and billing authorization is maintained by an operator of said return service in a computer server which is accessible from client computers over the Internet, and when an product is returned, it is identified by said unique identifier on or within said product, said server is queried with said identifier, and arrangements are made for return of said product to said owner, payment of a reward to said finder, and charging said amount of said reward plus a service fee to said owner, using said billing authorization.

20
25

10. Method of claim 1 wherein upon enrollment, said consumer purchaser is notified that said return service is free at said time of enrollment, but if said product is lost and then is found and returned to said return location or return agent, said consumer or owner will be automatically charged for said reward and a return service fee.

30

11. Method of claim 1 wherein said return location or return agent is an overnight courier or parcel service which has equipment to automatically read said unique identifier on or within said product and to automatically query a remote return service computer server which, in turn, automatically provides corresponding owner contact notification and/or return shipping information.

12. Method of claim 1 wherein said return location or return agent can automatically query said manufacturer over the Internet to determine whether a product is within warranty and to receive authorization to accept return of said product from said owner and ship said product to an authorized repair location.

13. Method of claim 1 wherein said return instructions and a reward offer to any person who finds said product after it has been lost are contained in a label which includes a sticker transponder adapted to be affixed to a product surface, comprising a flexible circuit substrate having an antenna formed thereon and a transponder circuit disposed on said substrate and coupled to said antenna.

14. Method of claim 13 wherein said sticker transponder comprises an adhesive layer coupled to a first surface of said flexible circuit substrate.

15. Method of claim 14 wherein said sticker transponder comprises a release liner affixed to said adhesive layer, said release liner being selectively removable to permit said sticker to be affixed to said product.

16. Method of claim 15 wherein said sticker transponder comprises an indicia layer coupled to a second surface of said flexible circuit substrate opposite from said first surface, said indicia layer comprising a space permitting indicia to be printed thereon.

17. Method of claim 16 wherein said transponder circuit further includes a memory.

18. Method of claim 17 wherein said memory further comprises a read-only portion and a re-writable portion.

19. Method of claim 1 wherein a product is delivered for repair to a package delivery or overnight courier service which has means to access to said warranty registration data which is stored on a remote computer storage medium by reading said unique identifier on or within said product, and wherein said service thereby determines whether said warranty is in force and a warranty service location to which to deliver said defective product.

20. Method of claim 1 wherein said unique identifier on or within each product sold by said manufacturer is electronically recorded in an RFID device embedded within a label on which are printed return instructions which identify a package delivery or courier service which is equipped to read said RFID device, wherein said package or courier service has means to access owner identification, owner address, and warranty information corresponding to said unique identifier, and wherein said service thereby returns lost products to their owners and delivers defective products to an authorized warranty service location.